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[0001] The present invention claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/271,066, filed February 23, 2001 entitled “Method and Apparatus for Finding Lost Individuals,” which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

[0002] The present invention relates to an apparatus and method for assisting to locate and find missing people, particularly children.

2. Description of the Prior Art

[0003] Nothing is more disturbing than learning about a missing child. However, many individuals want to help to find that missing child. It has been found that the success rate of finding missing children is very low. In the past, missing children's pictures have been placed on milk cartons or have been distributed through mailings. It has been found that such methods of distributing the missing child's picture have had very little impact on actually finding the child. It has been discovered that by placing a reward for information leading to the location of a missing child has improved the odds of finding that missing child. However, after a short period of time even this information may not yield favorable results. Therefore, it is an object of the present invention to provide an apparatus and method for improving the chances of finding a missing person, particularly that of a missing child.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] The present invention is an arrangement for disseminating information about a missing child so as to improve the odds of finding the missing child. Particularly, the present invention includes a body, such as a card or paper sheet, containing a writing surface that includes a reward section, a sponsor section, an autograph section and a missing person's section. The body includes a photograph, picture or sketch of the missing person and vital statistics as well as other pertinent information about the missing person. Further, the present invention is a method for assisting to locate and find a missing person by providing reward information on a single card, piece of paper, or other printable material, providing an autograph portion for receiving an autograph from an individual, such as a famous person or sports figure, providing sponsorship information, and providing a photograph and vital statistic information about the missing person.

[0009] In operation, the body 11 can be provided at any function or sporting event, such as a baseball game. Various sports figures, such as baseball players, can be present to sign the body 11 with their autograph 24 and their photograph in the area for an autograph portion 22 with the likeness of the missing person and the vital statistics and physical characteristics of the missing person preprinted on the body 11. Also, the body 11 identifies the amount of the reward in the area for information relating to the reward 12 and the sponsor information, such as a company, association or individual who is funding the reward in the area for information relating to the sponsor 14. Also, during the sporting event, the particular missing person's picture could be displayed throughout the stadium on the large screens or scoreboards that are typically provided at a sports stadium. It is believed that once the patrons leaving the stadium who receive the body 11 will place the body 11 in a noticeable spot such as on the front of a refrigerator or on a bulletin board or desk. The missing person's photograph will be a constant reminder to aid the patrons in remembering the appearance of the missing person. It is believed that the present invention will increase the chances of a patron, who received the body 11, to recognize or notice the missing person than if no reward and/or autograph were present. It is believed that if only the missing person's photograph 18 is passed out at the sporting event, that the missing person's photograph 18 and vital statistics would be discarded and would not increase the chances of locating the missing person and would have a similar result as providing this information on a milk carton. Another aspect of the invention is to provide a piece of writing material having a portion for autographs and sponsorship indicia applied thereon.

[0010] While a specific embodiment of the invention has been described in detail, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that various modifications and alternatives to those details could be developed in light of the overall teachings of the disclosure. The presently preferred embodiment described herein is meant to be illustrative only and not limiting as to the scope of the invention which is to be given the full breadth of the appended claims and any and all equivalents thereof.